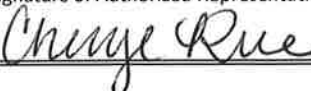


BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATION

For Fiscal Year 2022

Primary Applicant (Name and Address): Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. 417 5 th Ave N. PO Box 578 Strum, WI 54770	Applications MUST be UPLOADED to ERF via the Commission's website, http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF_upload/content/mymenu.aspx . Refer to section 2.3 for detailed instructions. Applications are due and MUST be uploaded to ERF no later than: March 17, 2022 at 4:00pm (16:00) Central Time. Late applications will not be accepted.
	Contact for further information: PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov
	Date: December 1, 2021
The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is seeking applications for Broadband Expansion Grants. The Commission may award one or more grants during Fiscal Year 2022 to public and private entities that meet the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504. This grant round will be funded with bond proceeds authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). As such, successful applicants are subject to the requirements of Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). Successful applicants will demonstrate a clear and achievable plan to improve broadband communications services in one or more underserved areas in the State.	
Applicant Certification: In signing this application, the undersigned verifies under penalty of perjury that the Applicant and its employees and agents have not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any agreement or participated in any collusion or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competition with respect to this application; that no attempt has been made to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application; that this application has been independently arrived at without collusion with any other proposer, competitor or potential competitor; that this application has not been knowingly disclosed prior to the opening of applications to any other applicant or competitor; that all of the responses and representations of Applicant in this application are true and correct to the best of the undersigned's knowledge, information, and belief; and that Applicant agrees to, accepts, and will comply with all of the terms and conditions respecting this application and any award of a broadband expansion grant as may be established in a grant award Agreement.	
Name of Authorized Representative (Type or Print) Cheryl Rue	Title CEO
Phone () (715) 695-2691	
Signature of Authorized Representative 	Date 3-14-2022

SUMMARY OF GRANT APPLICATION

Primary Applicant Name Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.	Amount of Broadband Grant Request (round to nearest dollar) \$1,855,000
Federal Employer Identification No. 39-1024048	Amount of Matching Funds Pledged (round to nearest dollar) \$795,000
Contact Name and Title Cheryl Rue, CEO	Total Cost of Proposed Project (round to nearest dollar) \$2,650,000
Telephone Number (715) 695-2691	Project Name Town of Trempealeau FTTH
E-mail Address(es) crue@tccpro.net	Type of Proposed Broadband Service (FTTH, Cable, DSL, etc.) FTTH
Grant Manager, if different than Primary Applicant N/A	Type of Proposed Project (Last-mile, Middle-Mile, backbone, other) Last-mile
Grant Manager Contact Name N/A	Grant Manager Email Address and Telephone Number N/A
If the application proposes a public-private partnership, list the names, addresses, and FEINs of the partner companies or organizations Town of Trempealeau W24854 State Road 54/93 Galesville, WI 54630 FIEN #39-6006139	
Brief Project Description (2 sentences) Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. will build a 53-mile FTTH network that will serve 180 underserved/unserved locations in the Town of Trempealeau, Trempealeau County.	
Maximum Proposed Download Transmission Speed 10 Gbps	Maximum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed 10 Gbps
Minimum Proposed Download Speed to Customer Location 100 Mbps	Minimum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed to Customer Location 100 Mbps
County or Counties served by this project Trempealeau County	Community or Communities served by this project Town of Trempealeau

List of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve CenturyLink/Lumen Hiawatha Broadband Wireless	
Does proposed project serve an <u>unserved</u> area of the State, as defined in <u>Section 1.4</u> of the application instruction? (yes/no) Yes	Is the Applicant certified as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community, or does the grant project propose to serve a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community? (yes/no) Telecommuter Forward! Trempealeau County Yes
For last mile projects or component the expected number of Business Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total business locations passed or with new service access). 4	For last mile projects or components the expected number of Residential Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total residential locations passed or with new service access). 176
Of the improved business locations, how many locations are <u>unserved</u> ? 4	Of the improved residential locations, how many are <u>unserved</u> ? 23
For providers that are eligible telecommunications carriers will the proposed broadband service be available to Lifeline customers? (yes/no) Yes	Are there any programs available for low-income households to access low-cost service or discounts? (yes/no) Yes
Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program? (yes/no) No Tri-County does participate in the ACP Program.	Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Department of Public Instruction and CESA purchasing's Digital Learning Bridge? (yes/no) No
Did the internet service provider participate in the Public Service Commission's voluntary Broadband Coverage Data Collection in 2012? (yes/no) Yes	

Summary of Project Budget and Funding Statement

FY22 Broadband Expansion Grant Application Budget & Income Summary



Please complete this form using Microsoft Excel. A PDF copy must be attached to your application as page four. In addition, this form must also be uploaded to ERF in Excel format.

Grant Summary

Grant Applicant:	Project:
Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.	Town of Trempealeau FTTH

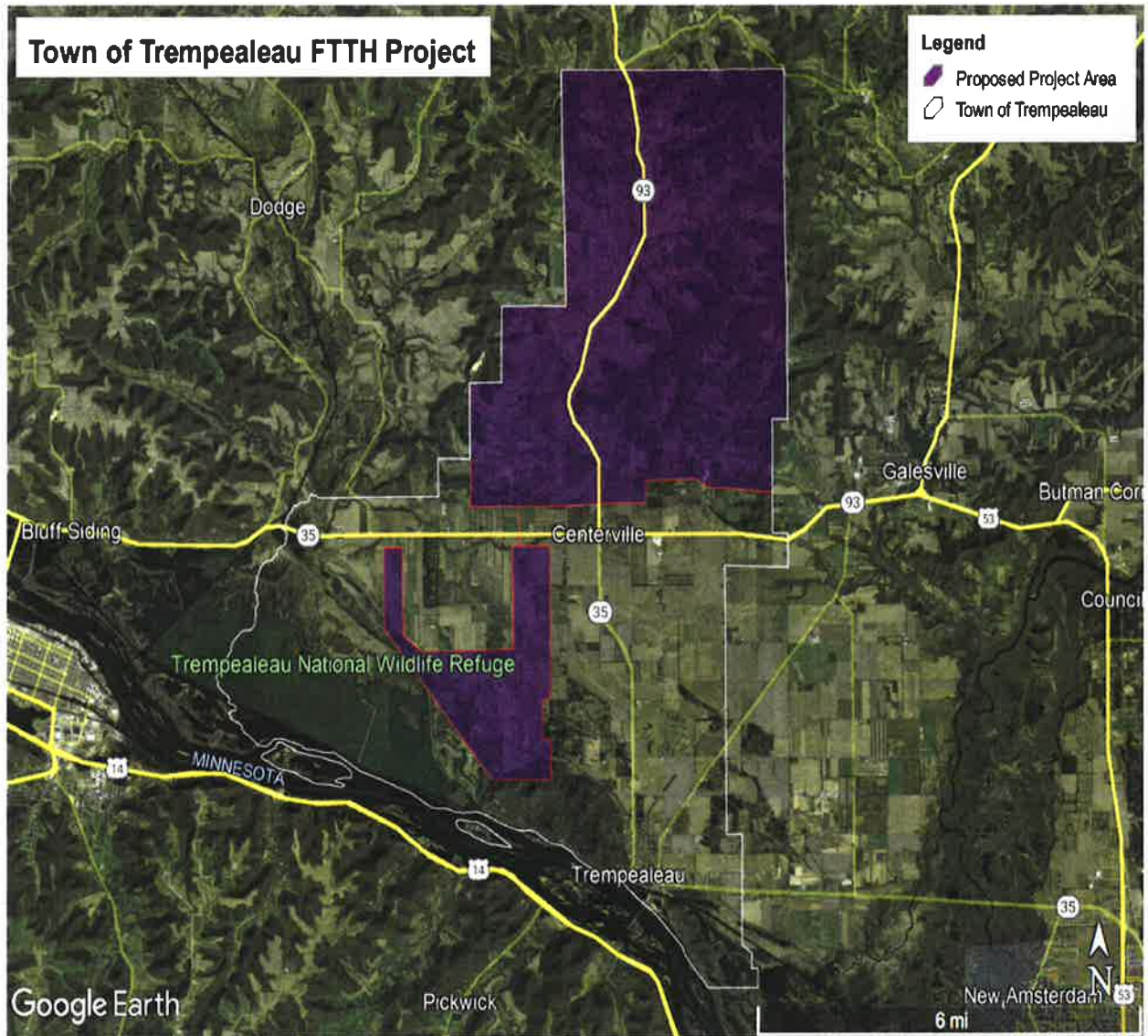
Budget

Line:	Description / Category:	Grant Funds:	Match:	Total:
1	Contractual, Consultant Fees	\$ 1,723,960.00	\$ 738,840.00	\$ 2,462,800.00
2	Equipment	\$ 65,100.00	\$ 27,900.00	\$ 93,000.00
3	Supplies	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 5,000.00
4	Labor (Salary, Fringe)	\$ 61,600.00	\$ 26,400.00	\$ 88,000.00
5	Permitting, Licensing Fees	\$ 840.00	\$ 360.00	\$ 1,200.00
6	Travel			\$ -
7	Other			\$ -
Total:		\$ 1,855,000.00	\$ 795,000.00	\$ 2,650,000.00
				30.0% match requested

Pledged Contributions

#:	Entity:	Entity Type:	Pledge Type:	Pledge:
1	Town of Trempealeau	Partner	Cash	\$ 381,800.00
2	Tri-County Communications Cooperative	Applicant	Cash	\$ 403,200.00
3	Marshfield Clinic	Other	Cash	\$ 10,000.00
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Total:				\$ 795,000.00

Project Map



Executive Summary

Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. ("Tri-County") is applying for a Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant ("Grant") to extend its Fiber-To-The-Home ("FTTH") network in the Town of Trempealeau ("Town") in Trempealeau County ("Project"). The Project will provide FTTH Broadband to 85 locations in an unserved area and 95 locations in an underserved area. The Town of Trempealeau is located in the southwest part of Trempealeau County. This Project proposes a FTTH Gigabit Passive Optical Network ("GPON"), with a minimum broadband speed of 100 Mbps symmetrical, to the locations in the Town that have no broadband providers providing reliable broadband speeds of at least 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up. The Project will construct a 53-mile fiber network covering a 27 square mile area in the Town. See page 5 for a detailed map of the Project Area. The estimated construction cost for the Project is \$2,650,000. The Grant request in this Application is \$1,855,000 or 70% of the new construction costs. Match funds of \$795,000 or 30% of the Project have been committed. The Town has committed to contribute \$381,800 of the match. Marshfield Clinic Health System has made a commitment of \$10,000 to the Town for the project. The balance of the match funds toward the Project costs of \$403,200 will be committed by Tri-County.

Tri-County currently provides FTTH to a large part of the Town, including the Village of Trempealeau. Tri-County has received many calls from residents in the underserved/unserved area looking for an affordable and reliable option for broadband service. The Project would serve those residents and provide a pathway to service many more homes in this area in the future. The Project area will be costly to construct and the Underserved/Unserved area may never be served without a Wisconsin Broadband Access Grant. Tri-County is unaware of any plans to provide facility based broadband service to the Project area by any provider by December 31, 2024.

In addition to a grant award, Tri-County is making additional investment in the currently served area of the Town, outside the Project area. Tri-County has a goal to bring FTTH broadband with minimum speeds of 100mb x 100mb and availability of up to 10 Gig to 100% of the residents of the Town.

To show their commitment to achieve their goal to get high-speed broadband to the residents and businesses, Trempealeau County has become a Certified Telecommuter Forward Community.

If Tri-County were successful in the award of a grant for the Town of Trempealeau FTTH Project, construction would start in the spring of 2023. Completion of construction will be projected for summer/fall of 2024, with installation of customer services through the winter of 2024/2025.

3.2 Mandatory application requirements

3.2.1 Applicant identification and contact information

- a. The name and address of the entity applying for the grant, and the mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address of one or more contact persons representing the applicant.**

Name of Entity: Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.

Mailing Address: 417 5th Avenue North
PO Box 578
Strum, Wisconsin 54770

Main Telephone Number: 715-695-2691
Contacts: - Buck Webb, COO – bwebb@tccpro.net
- Cheryl Rue, CEO – crue@tccpro.net

b. If the application proposes a public-private partnership, the identity and contact information for all application partners.

This application does propose a public/private partnership agreement with the Town of Trempealeau.

Mailing Address: Town of Trempealeau
W24854 State Road 54/93
Galesville, WI 54630
(608) 539-2902

Sonja Byrne	Town Clerk	townoftremp@triwest.net
Rick Nemitz	Town Chair	(608) 386-2733

c. The application must show that the applicant is an organization, a telecommunications utility, or a city, village, town, or county that has established a legal partnership or joint venture arrangement with an otherwise qualified organization or telecommunications utility, and as such meets the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504(1).

Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. is an Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier ("ILEC") certified to provide telecommunications service in the State of Wisconsin pursuant to Section 196.50(2)(b) of the Wisconsin State Statute. Tri-County's PSCW Utility # is 5950 and currently serves the Wisconsin study area #330960.

3.2.2 Description of the project

a. A static map and description of the area of the State that will be affected by the proposed project.

The map must be accompanied by:

- A URL reference to a spatial file (Geodatabase / Feature Class, or Shapefile or KML) showing the proposed service area. A spatial file including census blocks that intersect the proposed project area is also acceptable.

The Map on page 5 of the application shows the proposed broadband Project area.

A KML file of the proposed project area has been emailed to pscbroadbanddata@wisconsin.gov

- b. If the project area lies within a census block designated as served on the PSC Broadband Map, provide additional documentation to demonstrate the actual broadband service that is available in the proposed project area.**

Letters of Support are included in the attachments of this application from residents located in census blocks designated as served per the PSC Broadband Map. These residents, as stated in their letters, either have no broadband service or only have an option of satellite internet service. The Wisconsin PSC Broadband Map shows that throughout the project area there are many locations shown as “unserved”. These locations are surrounded by areas shown on the map as “underserved”. Tri-County and the Town believe that a wireline 25 mbps x 3 mbps service is not available to 100% of the Project area. Per the PSC Broadband Map, CenturyLink/Lumen and Hiawatha Broadband Wireless are listed as providers. DSL technology is the wireline service from CenturyLink/Lumen and because of distance limitations, the speeds provided to the vast majority in the area are not sufficient for the needs of today and in to the future. Due to the terrain, wireless is not a technology that works with great success to all locations. The large hills and valleys of the Driftless Area do provide challenges to wireless. The majority of the residents in the project area subscribe to satellite as the only option available. These residents, as stated in letters of support, find the satellite service to be unreliable and costly.

- c. An explanation of how the proposed project will increase broadband access. Include information about the:**

- **Potential and expected number of households served, including number of unserved and underserved locations.**

Potential households in the unserved area are 23. Expected households to be served are 19. Potential households in the underserved area are 153. Expected households to be served are 122.

- **Potential and expected number of businesses served, including number of unserved and underserved locations.**

Potential businesses in the unserved area are 4. Expected businesses to be served are 4. Potential businesses in the underserved area are 0.

- **Expected number of seasonal residents and tourists served.**

The number of seasonal residents are unknown. The number of tourists are unknown. The Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge and Perrot State Park both located in the Town and in the Project area are major tourist destinations. A local orchard business in

the Project area, whom has noted in an attached letter of support, served roughly 50,000 customers in one year.

- **Estimated download and upload speed of the broadband service packages available for purchase.**

Tri-County will provide broadband down/up speeds at a minimum of 100 Mbps/100 Mbps with 10 Gbps symmetrical available to all locations.

- d. A statement whether the proposed project is targeting the “last mile,” “middle mile,” or backbone portion of the broadband infrastructure.**

The proposed project is targeted as a “last mile”, dedicated broadband infrastructure. Tri-County is currently providing wireline broadband service and has access to adequate middle mile and backbone Internet access.

- e. A description of the broadband service to be provided, including estimated download and upload speeds, whether the speed is based on dedicated or shared bandwidth, and the technology that will be used. This description may be illustrated by a map or schematic diagram, as appropriate.**

Tri-County is currently providing dedicated wireline broadband services using a 100% fiber network. Tri-County will provide broadband service using a Fiber-To-The-Home network with Gigabit Passive Optical Network (“GPON”) technology. This fiber network will be similar to the fiber network currently in place and used in the Tri-County service territory. The latest technology will be used to provide the highest quality of service. The Project fiber network will be connected to the existing fiber network and broadband electronics used to provide broadband services in the Tri-County service territory. Current available broadband speeds and costs are as follows.

100 Mbps x 100 Mbps	\$49.95
250 Mbps x 250 Mbps	\$69.95
500 Mbps x 500 Mbps	\$99.95
1 Gbps 1 Gbps	\$199.95

- f. Middle Mile project information – not applicable**

- g. A schedule by which the applicant intends to complete the components of the proposed project. The project period is up to 24 months.**

If the grant application for the Project is approved in 2022, Tri-County is proposing the following schedule:

August – September, 2022	Order equipment/Staking
July - October, 2023	Bury main line cable
July – November, 2023	Install electronics at customer locations
September – December, 2023	Turn up Service
February 2024	Request final payment of Grant Funds

3.2.3 Itemized Budget (all amounts should be rounded to the nearest dollar)

- a. In addition to the Summary of Project Budget that is included as page 3, applicants should include a price list or quote for any equipment the applicant intends to purchase, including capital expenditures. The application should also indicate whether any facilities involved would be owned, rented, or leased.

Project Construction Costs:

The Town of Trempealeau FTTH Project summary of the construction cost for the fiber network. All fiber construction will be provided by a third-party contractor. All of the network will be owned by Tri-County.

<u>Description</u>		<u>Total Cost</u>
Buried Fiber Network		
Mainline fiber material and construction	\$ 1,894,610	
Drops material and construction	<u>\$ 596,590</u>	\$ 2,491,200
Electronics and Equipment		
FTTH Electronics	\$ 8600	
Splitters	\$ 2000	
GPON SFP's/CPE Electronics	<u>\$ 54,000</u>	\$ 64,600
Labor - Engineering/ONT installation	\$ 88,000	\$ 88,000
Supplies	\$ 5000	\$ 5000
Highway Permitting	\$ 1200	<u>\$ 1200</u>
Total		\$2,650,000

- b. The application must show that the grant, if awarded, will not subsidize the expenses of a telecommunications provider or the monthly bills of telecommunications customers. For purposes of this grant program, subsidize means a contribution to the operating costs, including profit, of the telecommunications provider.

The grant funds requested will not subsidize the expense to provide telecommunications services to end user customers. The grant funds requested in this Application will only be used to help pay for a portion of the fiber network and electronics used to provide broadband. No grant funds will be used for monthly recurring operating costs for broadband or telecommunications services.

- c. The application must show that the grant funds requested will be used for the sole purpose of constructing broadband infrastructure in the underserved areas covered by the application. Construction of broadband infrastructure may include any of the following:
- Project planning that takes place during the performance period.

- Obtaining construction permits.
- Construction of facilities, including construction of both “middle mile” and “last mile” infrastructure.
- Installation and testing of the broadband service.

Grant funds requested will all be used for the sole purpose of constructing broadband infrastructure in the underserved areas in the Town of Trempealeau. This includes project planning that takes place during the performance period; obtaining construction permits; construction of the last mile infrastructure; and installation and testing of the broadband service.

3.2.4 Priority factors supporting the application

- Matching funds.** A description of the matching funds the applicant will invest in the proposed project, if any. For each element, indicate the type of match (cash, salary expense, or in-kind contribution). If the application is submitted by a partnership, identify the partner responsible for providing each element of the proposed matching funds. *Note: The requirement for this information is satisfied via inclusion of the completed Funding Statement as page 4 of the application.*
 - If available, provide documentation to support an offer of matching funds (minutes of a town board meeting, a letter from a prospective customer or local government official, etc.).

The Project received matching funds from the Town of Trempealeau, from their ARPA and CapX2020 funding. Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. and Marshfield Clinic are also providing funds. Please see Funding Statement on page 4 of this application for a complete breakdown of matching funds. A resolution signed by the Town of Trempealeau board is attached to this application.

- Public-private partnerships.** If the public-private partnership is memorialized in a joint venture agreement or other writing, provide a copy of that agreement. If the partnership has not been reduced to a written agreement, provide a short description of the management role, financial commitment, or other contribution to the project for each participating partner.
 - In scoring this element, information regarding active engagement of diverse communities in the planning, permitting, or marketing of the project will be given weight as well.

Tri-County and the Town will enter into a partnership to build FTTH to those in the underserved/unserved project. The partnership is memorialized in a resolution passed by the Town Board and included in the Attachments. Tri-County will manage the construction of the network, own, and maintain the network when complete. Tri-County and the Towns will work together on planning of the construction to be prepared for future road projects and housing expansion. Tri-County will work with the

Town on marketing and customer education so that all residents are taking advantage of the services and opportunities that FTTH broadband connection can provide. Tri-County also provides classes to customers and non-customers, called TCC-U, which educate about available services and their use with broadband. Resolution passed by the Town are included in the attachments to this application.

- c. **Existing broadband service.** A list of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:
- The degree to which the proposed project avoids duplicating existing broadband infrastructure.
 - The application of a wireless broadband service provider proposing significant overlap with existing broadband service in addition to service to an unserved area will not be given priority consideration.
 - Provide a list of all landline broadband service providers (DSL, cable or fiber to the home) and fixed wireless broadband service providers that overlap the footprint of the proposed broadband project.
 - If known, provide an estimate of the customers within the proposed footprint that are served by competing landline and fixed wireless broadband service providers, and the download/upload speeds offered by those competing service providers.
 - Provide a list of mobile wireless broadband service providers that overlap the footprint of the proposed project.
 - If known, provide an estimate of the customers within the proposed footprint that are served by competing mobile wireless broadband service providers, and the download/upload speeds offered by those competing service providers. (The presence of existing mobile wireless providers does not contribute to or affect the evaluation of existing broadband service in the project area for purposes of priority consideration, but provides a more complete picture of the broadband options available to residents.)

The existing wireline provider located within the Project area is CenturyLink/Lumen. Per the Wisconsin PSC Broadband Map, the highest speed shown available to the residents in the Project area is 60 mbps x 5 mbps. The PSC Broadband map shows that in most areas of the project, CenturyLink/Lumen provides speeds of 1.5 mbps x .5 mbps. The majority of residents in the project area do not subscribe to these services due to the service not being available. Real world testing of speeds at locations that have the service have proven that these speeds are not reliably available. This service is provided through XDSL technology, which is a legacy technology that does not provide reliable broadband service. Because copper loops are used for XDSL technology these broadband speeds are significantly reduced as the length of the copper loop increases. Tri-County's position, based on comments and letters of support from resident and business locations within the Project area, is that there is not a provider providing reliable broadband service of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up, or 5 Mbps down and 600 Kbps up, to 100% of the Project area. This is also supported by the Towns

commitment to partner with Tri-County to bring broadband to the underserved/unserved areas. The Wisconsin PSC Broadband Maps indicate that both Hiawatha Broadband Wireless and T-Mobile provide fixed wireless service in the Underserved areas of the project. Due to the hilly terrain and the heavily forested location, these services are very limited in their ability to serve residents.

Current wireline and wireless providers in the unserved areas of the Project.

Wireline

None

Wireless

United States Cellular Corporation 2 Mbps x .064 Mbps

Current Wireline and Wireless providers in the underserved areas of the Project.

Wireline

CenturyLink 1.5 Mbps x 0.5 Mbps

Wireless

Hiawatha Broadband 60 mbps x 15 Mbps

United States Cellular Corporation 2 Mbps x .064 Mbps

T-Mobile 25 Mbps x 5 Mbps

TCC does not have an estimate of the customers within the proposed footprint that are served by competing landline and fixed wireless, nor an estimate of the customers within the proposed footprint that are served by competing mobile wireless broadband service providers.

- d. **Project impact.** A description of the geographic area and the population, both in terms of absolute numbers and likely users, which will be served by the proposed project. Indicate the number of anticipated residential and business customers in the project area, if known. Explain the speed and quality of internet service that will be available. Include information about the range of packages available for purchase. Provide details on any low-income access programs and steps the project will take to support adoption.

The Town of Trempealeau is located in a rural part of Trempealeau County and is the most populated town in Trempealeau County. The Project area is part of The Driftless Area and encompasses mostly rolling hills and forested areas. Bordered to the south by the Mississippi River, and located between La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Winona, Minnesota, this area is where many people are looking to live. Many, when they have the option of remote working for their careers, are looking for the type of lifestyle that the Town of Trempealeau provides. To continue to draw people to live in these areas, reliable, affordable broadband is necessary. The Project covers 27 square miles of rural, hilly terrain. The project will bring last mile FTTH broadband to 176 unserved/underserved residential locations and 4 unserved/underserved businesses.

Separate of the Project, Tri-County currently provides existing FTTH and cable modem broadband to roughly 21 square miles of the Town of Trempealeau, including the Village of Trempealeau. Tri-County has made a commitment, and is progressing in replacing our cable modem infrastructure with FTTH. With the help of this grant, ultimately 100% of the residences and businesses in the Town of Trempealeau will have access to FTTH broadband. With this project, Tri-County will be able to provide reliable speeds at a minimum of 100 mbps x 100 mbps up to 1 Gbps x 1 Gbps. The network will be designed, and constructed to scale up to 10 Gbps service.

Tri-County current available fiber broadband speeds and costs will be as follows.

100 Mbps x 100 Mbps \$49.95

250 Mbps x 250 Mbps \$69.95

500 Mbps x 500 Mbps \$99.95

1 Gbps x 1 Gbps \$199.95

As an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier, Tri-County provides discounts to resident customers for broadband service in accordance with Section PSC 160.062 Lifeline Program of the Wisconsin Administrative Code and FCC regulations for Lifeline support. Tri-County works directly with all local school districts to identify students that are not connected to a broadband service, and determine if Tri-County has facilities at that student's home location to be provided at reasonable rates. Tri-County has registered with the Affordable Connectivity Program in an effort to provide broadband services to those that qualify for that program. Documentation referencing the Affordable Connectivity Program is included in the attachments.

e. **Scalability.** A description of how the proposed project could expand or improve the broadband service it delivers, while maintaining the quality of its broadband service. This description should include specific projected increases in the following parameters that are known at the time of the application:

- The number of users.
- The number of network nodes.
- The number of services provided.
- The geographic area served by the project.
- The number of aggregation points in middle mile project.

This description may also include a discussion of possible growth potential that is outside the commitment the applicant is making as part of its application.

The Project is to provide 100% FTTH connectivity to the 180 locations located in the project area. Fiber is the future proof technology when it comes to the ability to scale to the broadband needs in the future. The electronics that will be placed, along with the fiber capacity, will be able to support up to 10 Gig connections to every location. Tri-County currently provides broadband to the served portions of the Town. This project will not require expansion to our current FTTH electronics network. Tri-County has been overbuilding its coaxial network for the last 5 years and electronics have been placed, and are currently in use, that will provide a robust FTTH service. Tri-County can

effectively build on existing network in place in our served area to expand broadband service to the Project area. Tri-County has made investments in its middle mile capacity to provide the broadband services at speed levels that are required today, and well into the future. Current electronics for middle mile will provide for up to 100 Gigabits of traffic, and can be upgraded as broadband demand grows. Along with broadband services, all residents of the Town would be able to have access to telephone and television services that Tri-County provides. This Project will be built to allow expansion in to adjacent areas as feasibility and funding would become available. The Towns of Dodge, Arcadia, Caledonia, and Gale border the Town, and all currently have some customers served by Tri-County. The Project will have the ability to extend into those unserved areas to provide service to locations in the future. Stated in the letter of support from the Town Chairman of the Town of Dodge is the goal to extend the FTTH network into portions of the Town of Dodge in the future.

- f. **Economic development.** A description of how the proposed project will promote job growth or retention, expand the property tax base or improve the overall economic vitality of the municipality or region. This description may be supplemented with a letter from one or more persons discussing the potential economic impact the project could have for that individual or business. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:
- A discussion of potential economic impact the project could have for an individual business located in the project area.
 - An explanation of how an improved download and upload transmission speed could better support a specific business in the project area.
 - An explanation of the likely impact improved broadband service could have on residential property values, supported by local sales data if available.
 - A demonstration of how improved broadband service to a residential portion of the project could benefit a telecommuting population.
 - A demonstration of how the speeds and service being offered by the project fits with current and future economic needs of the community and local businesses.

The ability to have access to quality, reliable broadband gives residents an opportunity to live, or buy homes in these areas. This continues to drive a strong real estate market that equates to more people living in the Town and providing a tax base that helps to maintain roads and other infrastructure in the Town. A local realtor provided a letter of support stating, "When I am selling a house for a customer, or looking to buy one for another client, one of the major considerations is telephone service and internet service". There is more than just reliable internet that drives home sales. Location, available services, recreation, quality of life, all weigh in on a person's decision on where to live. The Town of Trempealeau is located along the Mississippi River, between larger urban communities. Hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing are just some of the recreation opportunities available. Providing a place like this to live, and providing

reliable fiber broadband connection to the homes and businesses is essential for communities to grow.

The Town is home to many small businesses and is a major tourist destination. As part of its 2018-2038 Comprehensive Plan, the Town committed to supporting agrotourism to maintain the rural character and preserve farmlands. The area has three large apple orchards that offer a variety of experiences and products along with a winery, pizza farm and numerous bars and restaurants. Perrot State Park and Campground, and the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge along the Mississippi River are located within the Town. These businesses and recreational opportunities, along with many more, bring tens of thousands of tourists to the Town every year. These businesses know of the struggles in today's economy to operate without broadband. As stated in one of the attached letters of support, "one of the biggest challenges we have faced is having consistent internet at fast enough speed to be able to operate". Businesses need the tools to be able to grow in today's digital economy. Marketing, customer contact, on-line sales and reservations, are those tools that businesses need if they want to operate now and into the future.

- g. Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas. A description of whether the proposed project will or will not impair the ability of a broadband service provider or competing broadband service provider to extend broadband service to areas adjacent to the proposed project area.**

The Town of Trempealeau proposed Project would have no impact on another provider's ability to provide service in adjacent areas to the Project area. The Towns are very rural and are very costly to build, and probably would never be built, without support of the Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant. The rolling hills and heavy timbered areas of much of the project area, limit the use of fixed wireless as a service that can provide to 100% of the project area, or adjacent areas.

3.2.5 Other information supporting the application

- a. A description of applicant's history or experience constructing broadband communications facilities in the State and elsewhere.**
- **If applicable, an applicant must comment upon the status of all prior broadband expansion grant projects, including the type of broadband technology used, the facility route actually built or installed, the number of residential and business customers actually connected, and other relevant details of the prior project(s).**
 - **An applicant may also comment on broadband construction projects undertaken in prior years that were not funded in part by the Broadband Expansion Grant program.**

Tri-County Communications has been providing telecommunications service in its designated ILEC territory since 1964. In 1996 Tri-County started offering internet services. In 2006 Tri-County merged with Western Wisconsin Communications Cooperative, the only Cable TV cooperative in the nation, and the first in the world to provide a distance learning solution that served 7 local school districts. In 2008 Tri-County started a FTTH project to roughly 4000 residences and businesses in its ILEC territories. This project was funded in part with a \$17 million Rural Utilities Service loan. This project was completed in 2014 and is now serving all residents with a minimum speed of 100 Mbps x 100 Mbps, with speeds up to 1 Gbps available. Tri-County has also been working since 2006 to replace the coaxial service outside its ILEC areas with a FTTH network. Over the last 14 years, Tri-County has invested in excess of \$30 million in broadband upgrades to our members.

In 2021, Tri-County was awarded two Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grants. The Town of Drammen FTTH project was a partnership with the Town of Drammen, and brought service to 162 unserved/underserved locations in the town. Construction of this project completed in early February of 2022. Currently, approximately 80 of the locations have been connected, with the remainder to be completed through 2022. Tri-County was also awarded a grant in 2021 for Newcomb Valley FTTH outside of the City of Arcadia. This project is 90% complete and installation of services to customers is planned to start in March of 2022.

In 2021, Tri-County was awarded two ARPA Broadband Expansion grants. The Town of Naples FTTH in Buffalo County and the Town of Alma FTTH in Jackson County are scheduled to start in the spring and summer of 2021. Combined, these projects will provide reliable FTTH broadband to 518 locations.

b. A description of how the proposed project will or will not duplicate existing broadband infrastructure.

The Town of Trempealeau FTTH project will not duplicate existing broadband service in the Project area. It is Tri-County and the Towns position that reliable broadband connections that meet the requirement of 25 mbps x 3 mbps are not available to the residents and businesses in the project area.

c. A description of an applicant's financial ability to undertake the proposed broadband construction project.

This may include information such as the number of years the company has been in operation, documentation of successful completion of similar infrastructure projects, evidence that sufficient funds are available to cover project expenditure and match, customer turn-over rates, and credit rating.

In Section 3.2.5 (a) above we detailed the history of Tri-County Communications and documented successful completion of similar infrastructure projects. Tri-County is in a strong financial position and has reserves in excess of \$6,000,000 to help pay for the costs of the Project. Tri-County has seen an increase in membership of 11% over the

last two years with an 86% take rate of our broadband services. Tri-County was able to pay off its \$17 million RUS loan for the ILEC FTTH build in 2020, and currently has no debt.

- d. **This is not a middle mile project.**
- e. **This is not a middle mile project.**
- f. **A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of individuals to access health care service from home, including any impact upon the costs of those services.**
 - **Specific information from a hospital or clinic in the project area that currently uses or intends to use home-based telemedicine equipment to enhance access health care service would best illustrate this point.**

The proposed project will provide that reliable broadband connection that residents need for the future of home healthcare. With reliable broadband to a home, a resident can have access to virtual meetings with care providers. This can eliminate the need for patients to make those visits to clinics and hospitals. Monitoring of health conditions like blood pressure, diabetes, and oxygen levels can be done remotely, and in real time to possibly offer lifesaving opportunities. These great technologies can help residents stay in their homes longer as they age. It can give residents and their loved ones the comfort of knowing they are cared for, and still have some independence. The value of this project and importance is underscored by the commitment of Marshfield Clinic to provide \$10,000 to the cost of this project. Marshfield Clinic Health System has provided over 400,000 telehealth visits in the past 2 years. In its attached letter of support, it likewise noted that telehealth appointments demand a high-speed connection, and this project addresses a significant area of broadband deficiency in its service area.

National studies provide evidence of cost savings with the use of telehealth services. In a pre-COVID-19 study of 40,000 Cigna beneficiaries, the 20,000 beneficiaries who used the MDLive telehealth platform had 17% lower costs when compared with non-virtual care. Virtual care users also experienced a 36% net reduction in ED use per 1,000 people compared to non-virtual care users ([Healthcare IT News](#)). The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) [Report of the Taskforce on Telehealth Policy](#) discusses a variety of evidence that the use of telehealth services lowers the overall cost of care. We are confident that this national data can be extrapolated to this project area.

Residents in this underserved area of the Town of Trempealeau can access healthcare in Arcadia, WI, Whitehall, WI, La Crosse, WI and Winona, MN. None of these are located in the Town and they range in distance from 10 – 45 miles. Lacking adequate internet services and public transport, the only option residents have is to travel by personal or commercial vehicles to meet with health care professionals in person.

- g. **A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of students to access educational opportunities from home.**

- **Specific information on the likely number of students that will benefit from improved access to educational opportunities from home would be useful.**
- **Specific information regarding educational programs that are currently available for students in the project area would be useful.**

The Town is part of the Galesville-Ettrick-Trempealeau School District. Teachers and students alike that reside in the Town need reliable broadband. Education at the K-12 level, and on to the post-secondary schooling, have found a strong reliance on broadband to bring quality education opportunities. The Covid-19 Pandemic showed a glaring difficulty for those students that did not have access to a reliable broadband connection. Beyond the pandemic, schools are developing more on-line opportunities to help students outside the classroom. As stated in the attached letters of support from members of the administrative staff at Galesville-Ettrick-Trempealeau School, school districts realize the importance of getting every student the ability to have a broadband connection. The more opportunity a school can provide the more people that choose to live in that district.

Within close proximity of the Town are post-secondary schools of University of Wisconsin La Crosse, Winona State University, and Western Technical College. Virtual classes have become an important part of post-secondary schooling. Pursuing a Master's Degree or a Continuing Education course can be accomplished without having to commute to school. Students that choose to live at home to save on education expense, can access courses remotely and contact teachers outside of school hours when they have a reliable broadband connection. This allows them to attend school while living at home and still be close enough to the campus when they need to be in person. The economic opportunities are great for a young person, or someone continuing their education, when they can keep costs of schooling down being able to live at home. In the attached letters of support, we hear from both a teacher at Western Technical College, along with the President of Western Technical College as they address the challenges faced with a lack of broadband. Investments in broadband brings educational opportunities to many that may not have had those chances before.

h. A description of actions taken by a city, village, town, or county in support of the grant application that have not been discussed in the context of a public-private partnership above, including but not limited to:

- **The contribution of funds, easements or permissions to use publicly-owned real estate, construction materials, or other items of value to the grant project.**
- **The contribution of in-kind assistance to the grant project in the form of waived fees and expenses for obtaining use permits and permissions.**
- **The contribution of other items of benefit to the grant project, such as public outreach and education, vehicles, water, etc.**
- **Certification as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community.**

i. Letters and messages in support of the application submitted by prospective customers, local government officials, and other interested persons.

The Town of Trempealeau is making a financial contribution from money that they have received from the American Rescue Plan Recovery Act (ARPA). They also will be providing funds from a reserve account established with a portion of the CapX2020 funds they received when Excel Energy ran a high voltage line through the Town in 2016. This reserve account was set aside for a future use that would fund a project to benefit a large percentage of Town residents. The Town Board emphasized that this project will support underserved residents by reducing their dependence on vehicular travel to engage in business, education and healthcare services.

j. Any other equitable factor that the applicant desires to discuss, including one or more of the factors in Wis. Stat. § 196.03(6) that the applicant believes its project would advance. In discussing this element, the following information may be useful:

- **Technical support and training materials that the applicant intends to provide.**
- **Information that the applicant intends to use to promote better broadband adoption and use.**
- **A description of a program or outreach to provide assistance to individuals of low income.**

Tri-County provides various programs and outreach to provide assistance to individuals of low income, including the following:

- As an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier Tri-County provides discounts to resident customers for broadband service in accordance with Section PSC 160.062 Lifeline Program of the Wisconsin Administrative Code and FCC regulations for Lifeline support.
- Tri-County also works directly with all local school districts to identify students that are not connected to a broadband service and determine if Tri-County has facilities at that student's home location.

With the increased use of technology for daily activities and the movement by many businesses and schools to operating remotely during the pandemic, broadband has become even more critical for people across the country to carry out their daily lives. Tri-County's minimum internet speed is 100 Mbps symmetrical for download and upload. Tri-County's all fiber optic infrastructure will sufficiently meet household needs, including the ability to support the simultaneous use of work, education, and health applications, and also sufficiently meet increasing household demands for bandwidth.

Information that Tri-County intends to use to promote better broadband adoption and use. We complete premise visits to every address to discuss Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) with all of our grant projects. We provide the new customers with a packet of information, including the stages of building our all-fiber optic network to them. At that time, customers sign our permission slips to bury fiber optics on their property, and more often than not, customers

select the services bundle they want to have installed. There is no need to lock the customers into any contract; we know bringing a future proof all-fiber network is mission critical. Our mindset is to build it once and to build it right.

Tri-County realizes the importance of the services we provide to those in our communities. As a Cooperative, we have a responsibility to our members to provide these services at the lowest cost and to work with all current and prospective members on the best way to use these services. Tri-County provides information on how to enroll programs for low-income individuals through Lifeline Support and the Affordable Connectivity Program. Tri-County also provides educational opportunities through our TCC-U Classes along with educational and instructional videos on internet use.

Email confirmation of Affordable Connectivity Program Acceptance

Hello,

Welcome to the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Your election to participate is complete. You have been assigned the following Study Area Code(s) (SAC) for the ACP:

Provider Name/Affiliate Name	SPIN*	Study Area Code	State
Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.	143001845	833101	WI
Tri-West Communications	200000806	833102	WI

*If your company has a SPIN that is used for a USF program other than Lifeline (i.e. E-Rate or Rural Health Care), USAC has assigned you a new SPIN for ACP. We cannot use your existing SPIN for the ACP program. If a new ACP SPIN is created, the Company Officer listed on the election form will be assigned the 497 Officer entitlement for that SPIN.

System Access:

You will soon be able to access the ACP workflows in the National Verifier (NV) and NLAD. If you are an existing Lifeline provider using your Lifeline SPIN, all your users with access to Lifeline will also have access to ACP. If you received a new ACP SPIN, your 497 Officer will need to assign an ETC Administrator for the SPIN. The ETC Admin can then grant subaccounts access to the SPIN. It may take 2-3 business days for USAC to establish the new 497 Officer account before they can access the system. Prior to the launch of ACP, the activity you perform in NV or NLAD will depend on whether you access the staging environment or the production environment. The ACP workflows are only available in the staging environment prior to go-live. It may take 2-3 business days for USAC to set up your SACs and for your users to see the ACP workflow in the NLAD staging environment. Anyone who has an NV/NLAD account can test the ACP application in the NV staging environment right now.

Here is some additional information on how you may want to use the staging or production environments prior to the start of ACP:

- **Staging Environment**

- Test qualifying subscribers in the National Verifier
- Test submitting transactions to NLAD (verify, enroll, transfer, update, de-enroll) using the batch upload process or by API. Applies to all eligibility methods (AVP, active in LL, qualified in NV)
- Test pulling reports (in the UI or by API)

- Test creating accounts with a linked Representative ID

- **Production Environment**

- Create user accounts
- Link Representative IDs to API Accounts and other accounts in bulk

Zip Code File:

We have included a zip code template file for you to complete. This file will be used to populate USAC's Companies Near Me tool consumers use to search for providers. Please enter the zip codes your company provides service to, the new ACP SACs, and state. Return the file to ACProgram@USAC.org. To learn more about the ACP and the program's use of NLAD, the National Verifier, the Representative Accountability Database (RAD), and other USAC systems, please visit USAC's [website](#), join the ACP [email list](#), and sign up for [program trainings](#). If you have any questions contact us at ACProgram@usac.org.

Best,

Sarah F.

ACP Support | Affordable Connectivity Program
USAC
www.usac.org

**RESOLUTION
OF
Town of Trempealeau
Trempealeau County**

The Town of Trempealeau, a Wisconsin Municipality, acting pursuant to its authority under Wisconsin Statutes, hereby consents to the following resolutions, with said consent to have the same force and effect as a unanimous vote thereon:

WHEREAS, Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc., desires to commence a project consisting of the construction and operation of fiber optic communications services to provide the most advanced infrastructure to unserved and underserved residents of the Town of Trempealeau;

WHEREAS, The Town of Trempealeau, in recognition of the broadband underserved areas of its community, seeks to enter into a quasi-public/private venture to obtain, maintain and increase broadband coverage for the support of education, health care, growth of business, retention of existing business, tourism promotion, and overall economic vitality and sustainability;

WHEREAS, The Town of Trempealeau desires to pursue a Broadband Expansion Grant offered by and through the State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission;

WHEREAS, Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. is willing and able to partner with The Town of Trempealeau to provide the latest advancements in broadband coverage and to seek all available grants to provide and subsidize the cost of necessary broadband infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, The Town of Trempealeau desires to pursue and make application for any and all grant money available for broadband coverage with the assistance of Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the undersigned as follows:

RESOLVED, that The Town of Trempealeau authorizes the application to the State of Wisconsin Public Service for a Broadband Expansion Grant in partnership with Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that The Town of Trempealeau, subject to additional negotiations and approvals, will enter into a Development Agreement by and between Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that The Town of Trempealeau, will, upon approval of the grant application by the Public Service Commission and execution of the Development Agreement, provide matching funds in the amount of \$391,800; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the duly appointed Town of Trempealeau representative is authorized to do all such acts and to execute, acknowledge and deliver all such documents as he or she may be authorized by the Trempealeau Town Board to be necessary or desirable in order to carry out and comply with the terms and provisions of these resolutions, and all of the acts of The Town of Trempealeau which are in conformity with the intent and purposes of these resolutions, whether previously or subsequently taken or done, are in all respects ratified, approved and confirmed; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that all prior acts of The Town of Trempealeau in furtherance of the transactions contemplated by the within resolutions be and are hereby approved; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that all prior resolutions of the undersigned or any parts thereof in conflict with any or all of the foregoing resolutions are repealed to the extent of such conflict.

Dated: February 16, 2022

 Chairman

 Supervisor

 Supervisor

By: Anne C Kucowski Clerk



Marshfield Clinic Health System

Marshfield Medical Center
1000 North Oak Avenue
Marshfield, WI 54449

March 1, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto, Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53707-9100

Re: Letter of Support/Commitment for the Village of Trempealeau Broadband Expansion Grant proposal

Marshfield Clinic is an integrated health system located in Marshfield, WI serving central, north-central and north-western Wisconsin, this includes patients who reside in Trempealeau County. We are a Mission, Vision and Value's driven organization that strives to "Enrich the Lives of those we serve". MCHS has used Telehealth to reach unserved and underserved populations throughout Wisconsin since 1997.

MCHS is supportive of the efforts of this proposed project by the Village of Trempealeau and offer this letter of support and commitment for their grant application. Further, Marshfield Clinic Health System will contribute \$10,000 to the Village of Trempealeau toward this project if it is awarded grant funds by the Public Service Commission. This project will expand internet access to about 144 underserved families in the Village of Trempealeau.

Over the course of the last 6 years, MCHS has worked closely with the communities we serve in an effort to help them prepare for a time in which more healthcare can be delivered using technology directly into the patient's home. The COVID-19 Pandemic accelerated the move to delivering care via telehealth much more quickly than expected. However, Telehealth was able to respond quickly and offer continued access to healthcare services by our patients throughout the Pandemic. Since March of 2020, MCHS has completed over 400,000 telehealth encounters that were not permissible prior to the Pandemic. Despite the rapid advancement of Telehealth, access to broadband internet services continue to be our patient's top barrier in accessing these services.

Looking forward to a Post-COVID world, Telehealth is not going away. Federal legislation is expected to make these new flexibilities to use telehealth permanent. Telehealth visits allow patients better access to healthcare without the need to travel or miss work or school. This allows patients to more conveniently maintain their chronic illness appointments, have a visit with their Primary Care Doctor or complete needed follow-up care. A number of new services are likely to join the array of telehealth services already offered by health systems across the country. A patient's access to broadband at home will be a determining factor in which services they can consume and which they cannot. MCHS will be at the forefront of offering these new care modalities.

Collaborative efforts are needed to expand broadband across Wisconsin and MCHS is proud to support this Broadband expansion project and we urge the Public Service Commission to fund this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Susan Turney".

Susan Turney MD, MS, FACP, FACMPE
CEO



Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower 6th Floor
Madison, Wisconsin 53705-9100
Re: Town of Trempealeau FTTH

2/9/2022

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a local business owner writing in support of a proposed grant in partnership with the Town of Trempealeau and the Tri-County Communications Coop to bring broadband access to our township.

My family's business, Ferguson's Morningside Orchard LLC, is a popular fall destination for countless members of our surrounding community. Our apple orchard, pumpkin patch, retail store, bakery and more attracts over 50,000 visitors each fall and we believe we play a crucial role in entertaining and educating the community about where their food comes from. The tourism draw we create also positively impacts numerous other local businesses such as gas stations, hotels and restaurants.

At a time when most businesses are facing challenges with pricing and meeting employment needs, which we are not immune to, **the single biggest issue currently affecting our local family business is internet access.** Believe it or not, our internet connectivity has hardly changed in the 20 years we have been in this rural location, despite our business growing rapidly in that time frame.

Challenges caused by our poor internet access include several systems we simply cannot use which are essential to 21st century direct-to-consumer businesses: Point of Sale register systems, visitor pass tracking software, real-time sales monitoring, live security cameras and more. We have tried various alternative systems such as satellite, cellular options, boosters, different phone companies and even have had to explore paying to have a cellular tower installed solely for our own seasonal use. Our unique location in a rural valley, which is largely responsible for the appeal of our fall outdoor destination, make these wireless and satellite options unworkable.

Access to broadband internet which would solely be made possible by this proposed grant is essential to the continued expansion of our family business and countless others like ours. Not having reliable internet access costs us six figures a year in declined credit card transactions, lost income opportunities and inability to effectively advertise in real time using social media, which is essential today.

I respectfully request that the PSC approve the proposed grant to the Town of Trempealeau and the Tri-County Communications Coop for broadband access to our rural community. Not only do we believe we are an important piece of the state's economy, tourism and culture, we hope to stay and thrive here for generations to come. Thank you for your attention to this letter.

Sincerely,

Andy Ferguson
Co-Owner
Ferguson's Morningside Orchard LLC
N17543 Grover Lane
Galesville, WI 54630
andy.ferguson@fergusonsorchar.com 612-296-3793

Rob Grover
Owner/Operator at WInghaven Pizza Farm
N18057 Grover Lane
Galesville, WI 54630

Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower 6th Floor
Madison, Wisconsin 53705-9100
Re: Town of Trempealeau FTTH

Greetings,

I am writing you as a business and landowner in the Township of Trempealeau to strongly encourage the PSC to consider awarding a broadband expansion grant to the Township as it would have an incredibly positive effect to lives of the residents in this area.

Since opening up a my business, WInghaven Pizza Farm, in 2017, one of the biggest challenges we have faced is having consistent internet at fast enough speed to be able to operate. Currently, we have to rely on satellite internet that is both incredibly unreliable due to issues such as weather, and is very expensive. It also is data capped, which makes it very tough to get through an entire month without exceeding this limit, and therefore slowing our internet down to a point where it is almost unusable. The Town of Trempealeau, and really much of Trempealeau County, is increasingly becoming a tourist destination with many of our residents taking a risk and opening up a business on their land. If reliable internet could be guaranteed to all areas of the township, I believe this would lead to even more citizens pursuing a entrepreneurial interest, which would be beneficial for the local economy and quality of life in our area.

As a landowner and someone in their 30s, I know there are many folks that would love to build a home and start a family in the township. The lack of quality internet to be able to connect to school, work, telehealth, and just for the enjoyment of everyday life often makes them choose to live somewhere else to live, continuing the issues of “brain-drain” and population decrease that we see in many rural areas.

In closing, I want to again express that the hope the PSC will decide to partner with the Township of Trempealeau, Tri-County Communication’s, and the others that are building a coalition to help bring high quality internet to all citizens of the township.

Sincerely,

Rob Grover



Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53705
February 3, 2022

Dear Public Service Commission Members:

I am writing you to communicate my support for the Town of Trempealeau in securing a grant to for improving broadband access.

In my role as District Administrator for Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau Schools, I have found it to be very challenging to meet the instructional needs of my students due to the lack of broadband access that exists in some of the outlying areas that comprise our district communities, one of which is the Town of Trempealeau. The disparity in broadband access became especially critical throughout the COVID-19 pandemic during times in which all of our students were required to learn virtually. Although our students all had digital devices provided through the school district, broadband access limitations made it necessary for some of our students to miss live instruction sessions with their teachers and found it nearly impossible to upload/download instructional materials.

As we move beyond the crisis of the pandemic, our students' need for at-home broadband access will continue to be critical. No longer do our students experience make-up days in June due to weather cancellations in the winter. Our students are now expected to participate in virtual learning days when inclement weather makes for unsafe road conditions. Furthermore, our students require reliable internet access when working on research projects or accessing digital textbooks outside of school hours in their homes.

Please support the students of the Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau Schools in having equitable access to broadband by providing a grant to the Town of Trempealeau. The positive impact of the grant will have long-lasting benefits. An investment in students is an investment in all our futures.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michele Butler
District Administrator



17511 North Main ★ Galesville, WI 54630 ★ p: (608) 582-4657 ★ f: (608) 390-3053 ★ www.getsd.org

Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary of the Commission
Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower 6th Floor
Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Coker & Commission,

My name is Melissa Wilber and I am a resident at W26192 Wilber Lane in Trempealeau, WI. I am the elementary principal at Galesville Elementary, part of the Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau School District. I am writing to you in support of a grant for the Town of Trempealeau to bring broadband access to every home and business in the township and potentially even beyond to those of us who extend beyond its borders.

As a resident in a rural area, we struggled to connect to internet that is fast paced enough to allow two young learners and myself to connect during virtual learning. At times we will still need this for virtual snow days or on the occasion that one of my daughters is sick. I would often drive into work, leaving my two students to work with a grandparent so that I could eliminate my devices from the internet pull.

As a principal, I've seen first hand the inequities for those without a strong internet connection. Students who had a grainy or choppy connection missed out on valuable learning opportunities and often became frustrated. Delays and lag time led to confusion as well. Some families were without internet access entirely in their rural locations. This is challenging for students who are quarantined and may want to watch recorded lessons or stream live into their classroom. When snow days arise, students without internet access that is reliable struggle to connect and communicate with their teachers.

I hope that you will consider enhancing the lives of so many in this area through the solidification of this grant. From a parent and educator, I truly see the value of this project impacting lives for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Melissa Wilber".

Melissa Wilber

Roger Stanford, PhD | President

February 8, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower 6th Floor
Madison, Wisconsin 53705-9100

Dear Ms. Coker:

I am writing today on behalf of the students and community members we serve in the northern part of Western Technical College in support of Tri County Communications' (TCC) request to the Broadband Expansion Grant Program.

As you are no doubt aware, the state of the expert, industry-driven education and job training that Western has always provided throughout our district has changed dramatically since the start of the pandemic in March of 2020. Since that time, we have aggressively reacted in order to evolve our outreach, our instruction to both high school and college-aged students, and our services to businesses and trainees so that quality education can be accessible in safe, online hybrid or blended formats.

Lack of high-speed broadband in Trempealeau County has a direct impact on the quality of the content we provide. It impacts not just traditional-aged high school students taking college-level courses, but also workers who might be seeking upskilling for their current work or training for a new career. Access also supports the in-person education we are still performing on site.

We know anecdotally that our regional location in the area, in the town of Independence, has seen a dramatic drop of in-person attendance, yet we also know the need there still exists. There is a growing concern in our rural locations that lack of community strengths are impacting how our communities feel a sense of belonging—food deserts, healthcare deserts, and struggling local economies create barriers for English Language Learners and dual-credit high school students, both identities that often connect better alongside the personal touch our regional staff provide. If our students are not comfortable attending in person, it's more important than ever to ensure they are getting as authentic a Western experience as possible through our online offerings.

Please consider this important opportunity for TCC to not just help increase access, but also to support Western's delivery of our product as part of a crucial, overall community and regional development approach at this time.

Sincerely,



Roger Stanford, PhD
President



t: 608-785-9100



stanfordr@westerntc.edu



400 7th Street North | La Crosse, WI 54601



www.westerntc.edu

N18455 Hammond Lane
Galesville, WI 54630

February 9, 2022

Ms. Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower 6th Floor
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Dear Ms. Powell Coker:

I am writing to advocate for a grant written by the Town of Trempealeau and Tri-County Communications Cooperative (TCC) and submitted on behalf of the residents of the Town of Trempealeau. As life-long residents of the Town of Trempealeau, my family has faced substantial adversities resulting from the lack of reliable high-speed broadband internet access. It is my desire that the voice of our community will be heard and the opportunity for increased equity will be granted.

To provide you with insight in my family's specific needs, I am an instructor at Western Technical College, a college that serves our county and is committed to meeting the needs of our local employers by providing flexible learning options for students. The program that I teach is 100% online. By teaching within this modality, I have been able to reach many students who are working full-time and raising young families, yet also wanting to pursue their education. Within my role, I produce a variety of virtual learning materials and interactive assessments that instruct, guide, and then assess student learning. To effectively address the needs of my students, I must also be available, in a virtual capacity, to accommodate the diverse schedules of my students.

Where I live, I currently have access to two internet providers, and I must pay for both to meet my job-related demands. First, I pay for internet dish access through Viasat. The maximum high-speed data available is 150GB for a cost of \$199.99 plus access fees and taxes each month. In addition, I pay for wireless access through US Cellular, where the maximum high-speed data available is 150GB per month for a cost of \$160.00 plus access fees and taxes per month. Access to both carriers is needed to meet the demands of my job, due to reliability issues and the relatively low volume of data available from each carrier. US Cellular offers an estimation tool to help users determine the amount of data they need. Using a conservative estimate of 8 hours per day, the tool indicates that I would expect to use 352GB per month, for work-related access alone, which exceeds the allotment available by combining both carriers available in my area.

In addition to the limited volume of data and the significant costs associated, an additional issue with our current options is the inability to support multiple users. For example, my husband works for a local heating and ventilating company that services the school districts in our area. To ensure that the air temperature is appropriate for classes, sporting events, etc., my husband is required to frequently

monitor boiler temperatures. This is done virtually via installed software. Unfortunately, with the current bandwidth available, it is often impossible for multiple users to maintain a reliable connection. This also resulted in our daughter taking her Advanced Placement (AP) tests in the parking lot of a local supper club to ensure she did not lose connection. Additionally, our lack of bandwidth has a significant impact on the timing of our daughter's visits from college, as she is unable to stay at home when she has tests that are limited to one attempt or if there is a limited time-period associated, as we can't depend on uninterrupted access to the internet for multiple users in the home.

In closing, I appreciate you taking the time to understand the significance of this issue for my family and our community, and I ask that you please grant our request for reliable broadband internet access.

Respectfully,

Jamie Hammond

Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower 6th Floor
Madison, Wisconsin 53705-9100
Re: Town of Trempealeau FTTH

To whom it concerns:

The lack of adequate internet access has been a hindrance to my family for the thirty-three (33) years that we have lived in the Town of Trempealeau. Limited internet options have affected our professional and personal lives every day.

The focus of this letter is only about how this limitation is affecting me now, as a retired citizen who is actively involved in governance in the Town of Trempealeau. Currently I serve as an elected Supervisor on the Town Board, a commissioner on our regional solid waste commission, as a Trustee for our local library (Shirley Wright Memorial Library) and as an election poll worker.

I live on a 150-year old small dairy farm site. The farm is located three (3) miles north of Hwy 93/54 at the end of a dead end road. There are nine (9) dwellings on our road. The terrain is hilly and heavily wooded. There are no mobile phone towers that readily serve our area. To ensure that we have phone service we have to retain a land line.

Beginning in 2020, Internet limitations significantly challenged my ability to fulfill my civic role. Library Board meetings, all Township training meetings and election training meetings shifted to the internet. I cannot participate in any of these trainings at my home. To be an active participant I am required to find an alternate location where I get sufficient internet access for the trainings and meetings. That means driving to a location such as the library or Town Hall to use their internet Wi-Fi access. If these location are not open it requires me to sit in the parking lot or to find another location where I can participate without being disturbed.

I take my civic roles seriously and endeavor to be as knowledgeable as possible. Prior to the pandemic I routinely attended all trainings and workshops to educate myself on the state and legal requirements of my various roles. It was a struggle to maintain this level of engagement when all these offerings shifted to the internet.

Below is a list of some of the trainings and workshops I attended at locations away from my home between 2020-and spring 2022.

- Poll Worker Training – held annually
- Board of review training – required by state law
- WTA District meetings – training sessions held spring and fall
- WSLR training – Five different DOT training session required to rate local roads
- County Unit meetings – meetings of townships in our county held monthly 7x a year
- ARPA webinars – required to understand how the Town can legally use federal funds
- WTA Annual Conference
- Library trustee meetings – held monthly 12x a year
- WLA Library trustee training held once a year

Fifty percent (50%) of the geographic territory of the Town of Trempealeau is underserved with respect to internet access. Local government participation requires the volunteer efforts of a limited number of citizens in rural townships. Limited internet access is a real disincentive to citizen participation in governance for rural areas in 2022.

In partnership with a local coop, Trempealeau County Communications (TCC), The Town of Trempealeau Board and has opted to fund this grant request to improve internet access for all underserved township residents and businesses by applying 100% of our ARPA funds and an equivalent amount from other funds to support this grant request.

I encourage the PSC to award state funds that will provide the internet access needed in our Township to help ensure citizen participation in area governance for the future.

Sincerely,
Cristeen Custer
Supervisor 3
Town of Trempealeau

N18585 Hammond Lane
Galesville, WI 54630



08 February 2022

Steffany Powell Coker,

I am writing in regard to the state grant that will bring broadband to every home in our township. I live in the Town of Trempealeau which is a beautiful unincorporated area of farms and small businesses. I currently own and operate a woman owned and veteran owned small business, Dairy Train LLC, from my home in the Town of Trempealeau. My business employees four part-time employees and myself. We have two websites: dairytrain.com and dairytrainclassifieds.com. The ability to add things to my websites is difficult. I currently have Century link phone service in my home. We use two phone numbers and two different internet sources to make it possible to add items to our web pages. Web pages require the ability to upload and our current upload speeds are so slow that we have to split the load between two different incoming lines. My employees work both here and, since covid, from home.

Our township is comprised of the people who need broadband most. Agriculture is moving into a more computerized world. Our cows are milked using computers and electronics every day. Crops are planted using technology of the future that requires access to current and up to date information. My own little business sells dairy equipment across the United States and Canada. We work to help dairymen and women to keep their farms operational.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to having broadband access for everyone in our community.

*Dairy Train LLC
Suzanne S. Lane member
608-539-2075
suzanne@dairytrain.com
dairytrain.com
dairytrainclassifieds.com
N18643 State Road 93
Galesville, WI 54630*

Delivering new, used and hard to find dairy equipment



I am in favor of the grant for high-speed internet. I work at home and the internet is challenging to say the least. There are times when it seems like I have to wait forever. Thank you

Laurie

Laurie Nikitopoulos

Dairy Train LLC

laurie@dairytrain.com

608-539-2044



Steffany Powell Coker

Secretary to the Commission

Public Service Commission

48222 Madison Yards Way

North Tower 6th Floor

Madison, Wisconsin 53705-9100

Re: Town of Trempealeau FTTH



Sheryl Reedy
Broker Associate

Dear Public Service Commission,

I, Sheryl Reedy, a well-known realtor in Trempealeau, would like to express how important it is to have top access to some of the best broadband or service in the area. Like for my job and several others, it requires me to access the internet wherever I go because my job does not just end after I leave the office. For example, I am going home and taking phone calls, sending/receiving emails, and posting work related items on social media all the time. Not only is it important to have the best broadband for work, but it is just as important for recreational use as well.

When I am selling a house for a customer, or looking to buy one for another client, one of the major considerations is telephone service and internet service. A family with children may need to access the internet for online learning or to do daily homework assignments. A mother may work remotely from home where she must host meetings, interviews, or other online tasks. Or maybe a grandmother's only way to connect with her grandchildren is with smartphones.

In conclusion, having strong broadband is very important for several reasons such as an ongoing business owner running her business, a family with children who study online, a spouse that works from home, and several other recreational uses. As I stated before, having telephone/wireless service can be a make or break in the sale of a home. So, this is a letter of support for a state broadband grant in the town of Trempealeau and I have shown just how important it is, especially coming from a well-known realtor in the area.

Thank you for your time and I hope you really consider this opportunity of bringing broadband to the area.

RE/MAX

First Choice

16859 S. 1st Street

Galesville, WI 54630

Office: (608) 582-3338

Cell: (608) 780-7653

Sheryl@SherylReedy.com

www.SherylReedy.com

February 9, 2022
Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower 6th Floor
Madison WI 53705-9100

Re: Town of Trempealeau FTTH
Dear Ms. Coker:

I am a Town of Trempealeau resident, residing at N20279 Hovell Lane, Galesville WI. This is located off Hwy 93 between Centerville and Arcadia. I am writing in support of TCC receiving a grant to expand high speed internet in our Town of Trempealeau area. Currently we receive internet service through HughesNet satellite systems.

The service is interrupted during rain or snow weather, and of course, results in us having to have a satellite dish mounted to our roof or side of our house. The speed has always kept us from being able to stream movies. However, during the pandemic using zoom for church or attempting to work from home via VPN for zoom meetings has been virtually impossible for me. My role would allow me to have worked from home during high Covid rate times, while our bank lobbies were closed, but my internet service prevented that from being possible. So, I commuted daily the 30 miles to work in person, even on days my workplace was not open to the public.

Having a reliable high speed internet option would have a significant impact on my work options as well as our entertainment and educational opportunities given where we live.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Hovell
608-792-2400

Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower 6th Floor
Madison Wisconsin 53705-9100
Re: Town of Trempealeau FTTH

February 7, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker,

When I learned that the Town of Trempealeau ("town") and Tri-County Communications ("TCC") were partnering to apply for a grant to bring broadband to every business and home in the Town of Trempealeau, I thought it was a fantastic idea and a great way to serve the residents in the Town of Trempealeau. The Town of Trempealeau currently has portions of residents served by TCC and the residents of the unserved areas of the town are struggling with other broadband companies, which can't compete with TCC and the level of broadband service TCC currently provides. This leaves a significant number of residents with sub-par internet access and service options in order to function for work, school and personal obligations.

When the Covid pandemic ignited in February 2020, our day-to-day lives and the way residents communicated in order to run their businesses, function as high-performing employees, ordered essential groceries, attended meetings and most of all educated their children and ourselves changed in a way that made us realize how important broadband is to all of us.

My family's broadband provider is a satellite company. My son and daughter-in-law are both educators and when we (grandparents) had to help take care of our three elementary-aged grandchildren and ensure they could attend virtual school from September 2020 – March 2021, we then realized the level of insufficient broadband or internet services that could be serviced to our rural farm. We were running out of data quickly each month, the speed also weakened depending on weather conditions and many classes were conducted with poor quality limiting interaction of teachers and peers.

In addition to educating our grandchildren, I also incurred similar problems for myself, as I'm involved with several companies as a board of director, including an elected official, Chairman of the Town of Dodge, of a neighboring township. The flexibility and need to hold meetings virtually became a normal way to do business. Many times, I found myself seeking other locations away from home with reliable internet service to attend meetings. Seeking alternative locations, I was concerned about confidentiality and many times had to adjust my schedule based on the alternative location's hours. As an elected official, I know firsthand how improved broadband service can impact a township.

Three years ago, in the Town of Dodge, a Communications Company from Winona Minnesota approached the Town Board about installing broadband equipment in the town to serve a portion of our community with higher quality of internet service. This is an air signal type service and with the geographics of our township, many peaks and valleys, it isn't possible to reach all locations in the Town of Dodge; therefore, it was a concentrated effort to serve select areas based on population. The Town Board and I heard from a countless number of residents telling us how excited they were and thanking

us for getting this service to Town of Dodge. It was a great boost for the residents within the township service area with an immediate impact to each of their daily lives. My two daughters, who are in high-level accounting positions, were able to maintain the daily needs of their companies for the last two years due to this improved broadband service in the Dodge township. The service our Town Board brought to the residents in the Town of Dodge was imperative in order for our residents to maintain work, school and their employment needs. There still are portions of the Town of Dodge that don't have access to anything other than the unreliable satellite service, such as my own provider. There is one portion of the Town of Dodge that borders the Town of Trempealeau that would perhaps have opportunity to benefit from the broadband being made available throughout the Town of Trempealeau. By awarding a grant to the Town of Trempealeau and TCC, it could open an opportunity to assist another Township in providing a reliable broadband service to its residents.

The Town of Trempealeau is the most populated Township in Trempealeau County and the fastest growing in population. Please consider awarding a grant to this application as it would change the residents' daily lives, as well as it would make it possible to continue expanding broadband northward, making broadband available throughout Trempealeau County.

Daniel R Lilla
Chairman
Town of Dodge



JEFF SMITH
WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR – 31ST DISTRICT



February 4, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission
North Tower, 6th Floor
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53705

Dear Review Panel Members,

As you consider applications for the 2022 round of the Broadband Expansion Grant Program, I urge you to support Tri-County Communications efforts to expand high-speed internet in the Town of Trempealeau in Trempealeau County. Tri-County Communications has a great reputation for expanding broadband to underserved and unserved areas. This project for your consideration will have a positive impact on students, residents, and the economy of the county as a whole.

Tri-County Communications has operated in the Town of Trempealeau since 1980. They have shown a strong dedication to customer service and helping expand broadband access in their service area. I was proud to support them in previous grant applications and am pleased to do so once again.

The Town of Trempealeau in Trempealeau County is home to over 1,800 residents. Trempealeau County continues to make investments in its broadband expansion efforts, ranking 21 out of 72 counties in Wisconsin for broadband access according to Forward Analytics. Providing affordable, functional broadband is important for rural communities and counties, like Trempealeau, to foster the growth they need to retain talent and build their local economies. Additionally, the need for broadband was heightened after the COVID-19 pandemic forced our communities to operate remotely. Without broadband access, the effects of the pandemic were compounded and rural communities were hit harder than other areas of Wisconsin.

Tri-County Communications aims to bring broadband access to every home and business in the Town of Trempealeau. With the success of this project, students will have better access to remote learning opportunities, employers and workers will be able to work in a remote settings, the elderly will have better access to telehealth visits, property values will increase, younger residents will remain in our hometowns, agriculture will thrive and rural communities will grow.

I am proud to represent Wisconsin's 31st Senate District, and I am committed to the betterment of Wisconsin as a whole. With the help of Tri-County Communications, the Town of Trempealeau will be an even greater place to live and raise a family. I strongly recommend approval of their project application.

Sincerely,

JEFF SMITH
State Senator
31st Senate District

